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SUBJECT: GREEK VIEWS ON INTENSIFIED DIALOGUE FOR GEORGIA

REF: STATE 51994

Classified By: Political Counselor Karen Decker for Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Poloff delivered points contained in reftel to Greek MFA NATO Division Deputy Director Theodore Daskarolis on April 3. Greece shared the positive assessment of the pace of Georgia's progress by in many areas, Daskarolis said. He noted that other accomplishments, such as the growth of civil society and NGO activity, could be added to the U.S. list. However, the process of reform remainder incomplete, and Georgia still needed to take action in a number of key areas.

Most notably, he said, Georgia needed to complete its Strategic Defense Review (SDR). Until Georgia's armed forces completed this effort, it would be difficult to make a comprehensive assessment of the government's security reform efforts. Daskarolis also cited the importance of local elections scheduled for the fall of 2006 as an important way to gauge Georgian democratization efforts. Additionally, NATO needed to make clear to Tblisi what the Alliance's expectations would be for new partners. Given the clear role that Georgia's desire for closer ties with NATO had had on reform efforts in the country, Poloff emphasized the importance of not erecting barriers to dialogue, particularly given NATO's commitment to engage "any partner" seeking intensified dialogue (ID).

¶2. (C) Ultimately, Daskarolis said, the decision to support ID for Georgia would be made at political levels in Athens. Stressing NATO's need to move quickly to meet the timetable laid out in reftel, Poloff urged Daskarolis to seek clear guidance as quickly as possible, preferably in time for the April 5 discussion of the subject by NATO PermReps.

¶3. (C) Comment: The MFA NATO shop's reservations about the pace and extent of reforms in Georgia do not reflect what is otherwise an overwhelmingly supportive view of the country, particularly at the higher levels of MFA and the government. Given this, we believe it is unlikely that Greece will stand in the way of an early start for ID with Tblisi.  
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